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IV.

THE READJUSTMENT OF VOCATIONS.

THE central fact in civil society is the division of labor. All social questions must be studied with reference to it. It is not wonderful that the first people that obtained an insight into its potency as a means of elevation of man over matter and over brute necessity, should have ascribed to it a divine origin and invented an elaborate code of laws to preserve it. Such is the caste system of India—the division of labor elevated to a divine ordination, and the distinctions of caste from caste made as rigid as the distinctions of species from species among animals—indeed, more rigid than some Darwinians make them.

Looked at from this point of view of caste as an apotheosis of the division of labor, we may describe all human history, from India down to the United States, as a gradual emancipation from the tyranny of caste, the elimination of the element of social fate from the destiny of the individual. The progress of history is toward the point where birth shall not determine the destiny of the coming man. Society shall guarantee to all the possibility of a free career and the development of an ideal type of manhood.

But in our reaction against caste we are apt to forget its rational basis—the fact that it represents the division of labor, which is the foundation of spiritual life. Only by means of social combination is man able to lift himself above the brute. Through and by means of society, man is able to add to his life as an individual—that is, as an animal—another and higher life—the life of his species—a spiritual life. The life of the individual is one of selfishness and immediate gratification; but social life is everywhere a devotion of the individual to the service of others, and, at the same time, a participation in the common fund of service thereby created. This will appear in a more detailed statement. Man shares with the lower animals—at least to some extent—the

wants of food, clothing, and shelter. An exclusive devotion to the gratification of these wants is slavery. The direct gratification itself is an animal function, and thoroughly selfish in its origin and in its object. But the social organism works a miracle of transformation here. It directs the energies of each and every individual away from himself, and causes him to labor for others. In return for his labor it allows him to participate in the common fund of production created by the labor of all as individuals. Division of labor is thus the first great spiritual instrumentality for the elevation of man above the selfishness of the life of the beast. Instead of laboring directly for his own gratification, the individual man shall work at a special vocation and produce, not what he needs for his direct consumption, but what his fellow-men need in society. This is the filter which eliminates brute selfishness. All men as individuals contribute their mites to the great aggregate which society stores up and displays in its market of the world. For his mite she gives to each individual a stamped token of general or universalized property, called money, and by this means he is enabled to procure, in such proportions as he wills, a certain definite amount of all the productions that the human race has contributed to the world's market.

His deed—the day's labor—had been to produce a special article—a pair of boots, a pile of boards, a basket of fish. If directly appropriated for his own enjoyment, there would have been only an exercise of animal selfishness; but he plied his vocation for the benefit of others and not directly for himself. His labor for others is not animal selfishness. He has to prefer his general or universal self—the self of society or humanity—and to contribute his mite to its wants before he can receive his draft on the general market for the means to supply his varied wants. This device of society for purifying man from the selfishness of direct gratification, and for turning his direct labor into service of others and thus securing a preference of his general human self over his bodily animal self, is divine in its origin and purpose, and divine in its results. It is the true road to freedom from servitude to Nature. The steps to realize this freedom are these :

1. First there comes by division of labor a concentration of all the powers of the individual upon his vocation, and hence the de-

velopment of deftness or skill. The vocation becomes permanent, and is no longer intermittent because of the season of the year or the change of human needs. With the development of skill come increase of productivity and progressive emancipation of man from physical drudgery. Each member of society produces ten times as much as he could have done as an isolated savage; each member of society enjoys not only the productions of his immediate habitat and season and climate, but, through the mediation of the world's market, he enjoys those of all parts of the globe—of all climates and all seasons. And he shares in the world's productions at a far less expenditure of bodily strength than would have been necessary to him as a savage to secure the enjoyment of the scanty variety of his own habitat.

2. But this is only the beginning of the fruition of society. Being compelled to combine with his fellow-men for bodily subsistence, he is educated by social intercourse. He must subdue his untamed appetites, and realize in himself a morally-ordered will. He communicates his individual experience to his fellows, and in turn receives a knowledge of the life-experience of others. Thus he becomes a moral person and acquires wisdom.

3. In the distribution of food, clothing, and shelter, there is a miraculous increase in the amount of goods received in exchange, the individual giving his poor contribution and in turn being admitted to the market of the world and sharing the products of all climes, and the labors of myriads of men.

So, likewise, in the social interchange of the experience of mankind—the poor individual gets back for his beggarly crumb the aggregate experience of the human race preserved since the dawn of civilization and transmitted entire for each individual—without that division or diminution which is necessary in the realm of food, clothing, and shelter.

The wisdom of the race is not diminished but increased by being shared. This is the social realization of that deep mystery of religion—the doctrine of grace. The individual's puny effort is scarcely more than a recognition of his dependence upon society, and his humble prayer to be permitted to participate in its bounty.

What he receives as a so-called *quid pro quo* for his daily labor, transcends so immensely the amount of individual strength

realized in his own contribution as to render that in comparison a gift of free grace.

Participation in a common life—the life of the social whole—is the essential characteristic of spiritual life as contradistinguished from animal life; the realization of the social life in firm, enduring institutions, and the elevation of all individuals into a conscious participation in this life, is the object of man as an ethical being.

While seeking the gratification of physical wants—food, clothing, and shelter—the institutions of society compel man not only to put on the form and semblance of disinterested service of others, but they compel him to spiritual intercommunication, and the moral and intellectual growth which results from it.

In subduing his appetites and caprices for the sake of combination with his fellow-men, the individual comes to realize the moral image which is in him as a possibility. In giving to his crude fancies and opinions such forms as make them intelligible to other people, he comes to be a thinking being, and to know truth.

The whole process of culture consists in availing one's self of the experience of the race—the substitution of general forms of will, i. e., moral forms, for the caprice and arbitrariness of the natural (or savage) man—the reënforging of the insight and knowledge gained from the experience of one individual by the experience and insight of all men in all ages.

The social organism which renders this grand result possible is therefore founded on the division of labor. Bearing this in mind, let us now study the opposite tendency.

Division of labor demands for its existence a population living in towns, and a prosperous commerce with the producers of raw material. Hence it happens that in a new settlement or an agricultural country, division of labor begins at a minimum, and grows only in proportion to the growth of towns and the rise of a flourishing commerce.

The laborer cannot afford to isolate his work and concentrate all of his energies upon the production of a single thing, unless commerce will enable him to find a ready market for it, and furnish him in turn with the variety needed to supply his own wants.

Hence the pioneer is the type of civilized man in whom is to

be found the farthest remove from the caste system. The hunter, the herdsman, the primitive farmer, for the most part produce their own food, clothing, and shelter. So it is with the adventurous Argonaut who seeks new gold-fields. The cramp of his guild or trade, which has perhaps grown strong in his blood by hereditary descent for twenty generations—as in the case of the Sheffield knife-grinders—is soon obliterated in his descendants settled in Australia or California.

In the ripest forms of division of labor, the man degenerates into an abstraction, as it were, of his total self—a shred of humanity. Losing all versatility he becomes a machine, and can perform his task with a minimum of intelligent concentration of mind. Here it happens that an extreme produces its own reaction. Division of labor produces great skill; this results in great productivity, and this again in competence and leisure for general culture. With general culture comes the capacity to devise means and instrumentalities to secure results. Hence precisely at the point where man becomes the nearest like a machine, there occurs the opportunity most auspicious for the invention of unconscious machinery to supply his place.

Having reduced, by minute division, the manipulation necessary in each process to its simplest form, it is possible with a rude device to make one of the forces of Nature perform this process, while the human machine is set entirely free as mere hand-laborer, and is retained merely as directive intelligence to supervise the machinery.

The first rude devices of machinery are quickly replaced by others better adapted for their work. But the most important thing to notice is that a synthetic or combining tendency manifests itself here. The secondary stage of machinery unites two or more simple machines into a complex one. Although continued simplification goes on as regards the machinery for performing elementary processes, the combination of simple machines into one is the important characteristic of progress.

By the first series of machines—the simple ones which perform only one process—there is already great gain in productivity. The mere hand-laborer is thrown out of employment—a few only of the most intelligent are retained as supervisors and directors of the machines. The art of “learning the trade” is also very

much simplified—the system of long apprenticeship is abolished. While it took seven years of laborious service by the old hand-process to acquire the delicacy of manipulation requisite to produce the standard quality of manufacture, it now requires only a few weeks to learn to produce a better quality by the agency of a machine. It requires, however, greater breadth of intelligence. This result goes on with constant acceleration in connection with the second series of machines—those which combine simpler machines into complex ones. With this there is a still greater increase of productivity, and a much vaster exodus of human laborers no longer needed. There is likewise a process of change in the *personnel* of the laborers who are retained. The nearer to the primitive craftsman, the greater is the ascent of physical strength and dexterity over mental cultivation and versatility. But the more complex the machinery becomes, the greater becomes the versatility required, and the less important the physical strength and dexterity. Hence we find the tendency to employ women as laborers in the place of men in a greater variety of occupations. The broad contrast between the vocation of woman and that of man in the age of the greatest division of labor has, therefore, a tendency to vanish in our age of the invention of machinery. Woman no longer finds sole occupation for her versatility within the family circle, but enters the domain of civil society, and finds an increasing demand for her qualities of service—delicacy and versatility rather than strength and persistency.

The outcome of this age of invention of labor-saving machinery is, therefore, seen to be perpetual elimination of the great multitude of least intelligent and least versatile laborers. With this, there is a continual increase of production also, and a consequent cheapening of the products. Looking at these results from a general point of view, one can see that man advances in the conquest of Nature—being able to utilize more and more of Nature, and becoming progressively capable of employing the forces of Nature in elaborating the matter of Nature.

For all who investigate social problems and seek their solution, the chief interest lies in this perpetual elimination (or throwing out of employment) of laborers from each guild or vocation, a process which keeps pace with the progress of invention. It is

not the preservation of caste that concerns us, but this frightful method of breaking it down.

The laboring population, educated on the old basis of division of labor, learns its trade, and is able to earn a comfortable living at it. Hereditary descent of tendencies makes the children more skillful than the parents. But suddenly an invention is wrought out by some fertile mind which places in competition with the human machines a machine made of brass and iron, which can far excel in power of production and in uniformity of its quality the former. The adoption of the new machinery gives employment to one in a hundred of the former laborers; a few, who have no other resource, struggle on in a vain attempt to compete with the new, but are soon forced to starve. There is no resource left for the many except to seek some other vocation. But the readjustment will not be found until after the pain resulting from poverty, disease, worry, and crime, has decimated their ranks. The laborers thus rudely jostled from their life-vocation are not the only ones who suffer. The pauper and criminal class share their punishment with the social whole that permits them to fall into temptation. Their life is anæsthetic in its effects upon them, and they endure their lot with little pain, while the rest of society is keenly sensitive to the wounds inflicted by these unfortunates.

In view of the evils at present caused by the necessity of readjustment of vocations, we ask, "What is the remedy?"

Leaving out of view the modifying influences of trade and finance, the various ameliorations and reliefs afforded by charities and noble benefactions, it must be evident that there are two great remedies: the first, that of affording facilities for migration; the second, that of educating the people to versatility and easy readjustment of vocation. Neither of these remedies is sufficient by itself. Migration is necessary and desirable under all circumstances. This we have seen from the fact that invention has diminished, and constantly diminishes, the number required to perform a given amount of manufacturing or exchange. There is increase also of production of the raw material, but invention does not so readily affect that department of industry. Large numbers of people, cast on shore by the fluctuations of mechanic industry, must seek new homes on the border-land.

Sometimes there are special political and financial perturbations which heighten the necessity for this movement. Such special causes we have ourselves witnessed in this country. Thirteen years ago our productive industry received a shock by the sudden conversion of the energies of a million of able-bodied men from the arts of war to the arts of peace—from the arts of destruction to the arts of production. So great and so sudden a change could not transpire without disastrous consequences to civil and political society.

Physicians tell us that the sudden healing of long-seated chronic diseases is apt to overthrow the health. Dyspepsia thus cured may result in consumption, or in heart-disease. By the recently much-discussed law of the transmutation of energies, it would be expected that the sudden removal of obstacles, upon which the larger part of the organic energies had been gradually concentrated, would be liable to divert these energies to some other parts of the system, and for a while arouse it to preternatural activity, in a brief period to be followed by reaction and disease.

During our civil war there had been going on a development of the application of machinery to productive industry such as we had never before witnessed. In 1865 the products of industry, as furnished by our people, far surpassed the aggregate of production in 1860. This happened when the energies of two millions of able-bodied men were utterly withdrawn from useful labor. These two millions of men were not merely non-producers, they were destroyers, on the grandest scale, of the fruits of industry. There is no waste like that of war. It is conflagration heightened by the assistance of human fury. Where there was such a waste there was a corresponding demand for the products of industry, and the remnant of laborers felt a demand for their services such as they had not until now experienced. It was like the upward suction in the vortex of a tornado. Persons who, in ordinary times of peace, had not found themselves able to elbow their way into comfortable subsistence, now could amass wealth without great seeking for opportunities. The aid of human industry by labor-saving machinery gave to the popular mind a consciousness of the invincible might of spirit over Nature, and over the accidents of history which prevent

individual and social progress; even the most despairing conservatives began to give way to the intoxication, and become violent radicals.

In 1865 the waste of products of industry by war suddenly ceased, and at the same time a million of strong men returned to peaceful industry and augmented the national productions, while the home market for those productions had, in a large measure, decreased by the cessation of war. For yet a few years manufacturing industry exerted itself by means of its immense accumulation of capital to find new markets at home and abroad. It built forty thousand miles of new railway, and thus created transit facilities in advance of the actual demands of society.

This struggle ended with the financial crash of 1873. The distant consumers, newly reached by the railroad and made participators in the commercial exchange of raw material for manufactured products (the great social industrial process that unites all civilized mankind), became distrustful and ceased to buy the merchant's wares; the backwoodsmen and agricultural population returned to supplying their wants with home-made productions. Then the era of financial disaster set in—it lasts still—and the rapidly-made fortunes of the eras of prosperity are being as rapidly dissipated.

The tides of migration, which were high before 1860, had nearly ceased to flow in 1873, and an actual return of emigrants had set in. There was no work for the new laborer. Even a small return of emigrants operates disastrously upon the older communities. It effects the twofold result of diminishing the market for its productions and of overstocking its supply of laborers; this causes hard times and depression in the hopes of the people; enforced idleness and beggary, loss of self-respect, and crime, continue to increase in such a condition of affairs. The effects of migration, on the other hand, are these:

1. Those who migrate to the wilderness have constant employment for all their time; they must build houses and break up the soil; they are stimulated to their best efforts because every stroke of work tells; they see every week before their eyes the results of last week's toil.

2. Before they migrated they were working on half-time, perhaps; they had lost their property, and were compelled to see

their weekly toil yield small visible results. There were drudgery and discomfort in their old home—now there are enterprise and hope, here in the new settlement.

3. Again, the effect of migration is good at both ends of the line. The old community was overstocked with labor, and there was too little demand for its products. After the migration has taken place, there is more work for each person to do in the old community; hence wages rise there, and enterprise increases; moreover, the demand for productions increases by reason of the market created in the new settlements on the border-land.

There is as much excitement and romance attending the formation of a new settlement as there is in attending a hunting-party, a voyage of exploration, or a crusade. The feeling of discovery; the spectacle of wealth created out of crude possibilities; the realization of the mighty power which the social bond gives to the individual in his contest with Nature—all these gladden the hearts of the new settlers. They see their land increase in value manifold within a few weeks. Property is increased in value by the mere fact of the presence of people far more than by the actual amount of physical labor expended on it.

Migration is the great available means of present readjustment of vocations. It says to the citizen who falls out of his place in the line of productive industry: "Go to the foot of the line and begin again. Engage in the exciting task of building up civilization in an empty wilderness, and you and your children shall thrive once more." The tonic effect of a residence on the border-land is so potent that it deserves to be applied as a remedy in numerous social distempers. In fact, a regular circulation should be kept up between the centre and circumference. A border-land is a perennial incident to civilization; no matter how large the circle of civilization, the pioneer-process is always to be found on its circumference.

But migration does not solve the question definitively; indeed, migration itself presupposes some versatility obtained by general theoretical culture of the schools. It is obvious that the best chances will be for that immigrant who comes with a knowledge of school-learning. Education is manifestly the most potent means of preparing in advance for the ready readjustment of the laborer in a new vocation. Any general preparation of the

laborer for his calling will give him versatility, and contribute to his ability to adapt himself to whatever change may transpire in his fortunes. The general education begun in our common schools, and continued in our academies, high-schools, and colleges, is undoubtedly capable of the widest practical application, and best fits one for readjusting his vocation in life. The more special the education the less it fits the individual for this change. But we must not conclude from this that branches less general in their nature than those ordinarily taught in our schools should not be introduced into the curriculum—quite the contrary. While claiming that the studies of our common schools are the most practical of elementary studies, it is possible to introduce disciplines which point to mechanical vocations, without in the least injuring the old course of study.

Industrial education—specially so called—has or should have its place in our common schools and high-schools as an additional safeguard against disaster in the process of readjustment, which must go on uninterrupted among the American laboring-population. It should partly precede and partly follow, as well as accompany, the general course of study in the common school :

1. There is first a most carefully-devised scheme, laying a foundation for industrial skill in general, before the pupil is mature enough to take up the studies of the general curriculum of the common school. Froebel's Kindergarten takes the child at four years of age—while his muscles are yet unformed—and disciplines them in such a way that they will have for all after-life the special development which gives skill in manipulation. While it does not neglect the child's imagination nor his manners, it lays a good foundation for skill in the use of the hand and eye, and in the first theoretical steps in form and number.

2. Drawing is the chief industrial study in the common school proper; and, if taught thoroughly in all its departments, it will nearly suffice for the general training of the hand and eye, such as is indispensable in most of the arts and trades.

3. Finally, the institution called "school-shops" creates versatility within the range of mechanical industries. It is in this "school-shop" that the pupil learns the theory and practice of tools in general; and a boy well trained in a "school-shop" would learn the mysteries of a special trade in a month, and would

go forth into the world of industry able to readjust himself if any untoward accident happened to his special vocation.

Although art-education is allied to industrial education, the two are not identical; art-education is the training which fits one for the appreciation and production of the beautiful—as ornament or as free art. It is obvious that a large portion of the labor set free by the increased productivity of new mechanical inventions should not be forced to migrate, but should remain and devote itself to the ornamentation of the manufactured products. Further elaboration, higher degree of finish, should add greatly to the market value without increasing the bulk. This is the process described as the enhancing of values by mixing brains with the manufactured products. To add beauty to mere use increases the market value. The money paid for ornament is astonishingly out of proportion to that paid for mere use. The retention at home here in the United States of the money sent abroad to France, England, or Italy, for various forms of ornament would go far to enrich those superfluous workmen who fall out of their vocations by reason of inability to adapt themselves to changes.

With a perfect system of readjustment of vocations, it is obvious that the progress of mechanic invention brings with it emancipation from physical labor, and the opportunity for each and all to ascend in the direction of those vocations having for their end the direct ministrations to the spiritual wants of man. The artisan will give place for the artist in each department of industry. The vocations devoted to obtaining natural productions, to their elaboration (manufacturing), to their exchange and distribution, and to the public protection, are destined to employ mankind in a gradually decreasing ratio; while those vocations which are devoted to human nurture and education, to the Church, to the reflection of human life through artistic and literary productions, and to pure science, will be followed by an increasing number of people.

WILLIAM T. HARRIS.